



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3605

March 27, 2023

Commissioner Mike Morath
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas, 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath,

As Members of Congress, keeping our communities safe is one of our top priorities. We are heartbroken by the recent tragic deaths of young people in our communities and are writing to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to identify ways we can work together to respond to the increase of fentanyl in our schools and make sure that these tragedies never happen again. In light of these tragic deaths, we are seeking more information about TEA's response to concerns raised by parents and community members.

We are deeply concerned by the presence of fentanyl in our communities, particularly in our schools. Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for 18 to 45 year olds in the U.S., and the deaths nearly doubled between 2020 and 2021.¹ Fentanyl is 100 times stronger than morphine and has resulted in 64 percent of all overdose deaths nationwide.² Fentanyl overdoses are happening in communities across the nation, and are specifically on the rise in North Texas. Since September 2022, at least 9 teens in Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District schools have suffered from overdoses of fentanyl.

The U.S. Department of Education provides state education agencies with educational resources for students and parents on the dangers of opioid abuse.³ Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has various grant programs available, including the State Opioid Response Grant program, which provides states and localities with resources to increase access to FDA-approved medications for opioid use treatment and to support prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support services for opioid use disorder.⁴

¹ Families Against Fentanyl, December 15, 2021; <https://www.familiesagainstoffentanyl.org/research/byage>

² Texas Targeted Opioid Response, March 2, 2023; <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/mental-health-substance-use-resources/fighting-fentanyl>

³ Department of Education Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools, 2018; <https://rem.sde.gov/docs/Opioid-Fact-Sheet-508C.pdf>

⁴ Health and Human Services, May 19, 2022; <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/05/19/biden-administration-announces-15-billion-funding-opportunity-state-opioid-response-grant-program.html>

We understand that these federal-state partnerships are critical to this fight, and it will take all of us working together to address this crisis. One young person lost to an overdose is one too many and opioids have had devastating effects on our communities.

To ensure we are fulfilling our responsibility as Members of Congress, we kindly ask that you respond to the following questions by April 17, 2023.

1. What is TEA's policy for responding to concerns raised by parents about the presence of fentanyl and other illicit drugs in the community?
2. What avenues are available for parents to raise concerns at the local and school district level?
3. What drug prevention programs and policies does TEA currently have in place? Have you identified gaps where additional programming is needed?
4. What guidance has TEA provided to local school districts on how to identify signs of fentanyl or other illicit drugs in schools and the community?
5. What resources does TEA provide to local school districts once a need is identified?
6. Do local school districts have easy and affordable access to Naloxone? What is the process for the school districts to receive Naloxone?

We look forward to working with you to protect our communities and ensure the safety of all students.

Respectfully,



Rep. Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Rep. Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Rep. Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Rep. Michael Burgess
Member of Congress



Rep. Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



Rep. Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress